

five pieces of eight by orphan_account

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Summary:

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Billy doesn’t even turn to look at him when he speaks, and Steve is forced to stare daggers into the curly golden ringlets of hair shielding the better part of the Captain’s face instead.

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(aka the **pirates!au** absolutely no one asked for)

1. oak

“And just who the *fuck* do you think you are, boy? Just because ‘yer pop controls trade around here you ‘aint got no right to steal from my crew. Y’aint got no right to steal from *me* .”

A blackened hand wraps around Steve’s throat, scarred palm effectively pressing into his adam’s apple and cutting off the flow of air to his lungs. He scrabbles for purchase on his stucco’d meeting room wall, but comes up empty, only managing to scratch blindly at the chipping plaster.

Just another day it seems. Steve knew he’d get some resistance when he’d announced last full moon that he was planning on tightening trade regulations, but he thought he’d managed to maneuver his way out of the majority of the inevitable dissent. He chose his timing perfectly, and made sure the belly’s of all of Nassau’s remaining regulars were filled to the brim with liquor when he’d made his speech. They’d taken it better than he could’ve hoped at the time as the promise of more prettier, bustier whores and better access to fresher food and better ale had quelled the potential flames of a revolt surprisingly well.

Of course he’d made sure they knew who exactly he was, and who exactly his father was, too. But that was all just showmanship. The men knew very well that Nassau was their best port of trade, and Steve was right to think they weren’t willing to fuck it up just yet. The whole point of Nassau is that it’s *easy* . Merchants and traders come far and wide to consider what the Pirate’s have to sell. Legality is irrelevant here as a point of fact, and the island has always had a lot to offer in the ways of women and good food.

But that was a week ago now, and Steve has apparently managed to forget one very important Sailor. That’s what the man insisted he was anyway, when he’d dragged Steve up the stairs of his own Tavern and shoved him into the closest empty room.

Despite having shouted at least six times that his business is absolutely vital to Steve’s success here, Steve is fairly certain he’s never seen this man before in his life; and the Captain gives off a

stench so ripe and reminiscent of raw rotting meat that Steve knows he'd remember it if he'd ever had the displeasure of *smelling* him before. The bay is never free of sweating, shit, piss and blood crusted men, who have undoubtedly not seen a bath in years at the very least, but this really is a new level.

It's always the ones with the least to offer who think they're the most important, Steve supposes. Insecurity breeds pigs in men who have never been smart or strong enough to make real names for themselves. Piracy at its' core is all about power, and nothing brings a man power like the infamy of his name. This man will never be a Blackbeard. He'll never be a Calico Jack or a Long John Silver or a Captain Flint. Steve will *not* lose everything he's worked for to be choked out by this greasy motherfucker.

Steve chokes as he attempts to gulp in a lung full of air -- he can feel his windpipe bending and creaking like the weathered foundations of an old shanty town shack, ready to snap if the man's sausage-thick fingers squeeze even the slightest bit tighter. Steve lifts one knee up and plants his boot firmly against the wall behind him, and in a split second the Captain is keeling over with a high-pitched cry, Steve's other knee digging into his groin so hard that his balls have probably retreated all the way back into his body. Eyes darting around the room, Steve dodges over to his desk and pulls a rapier the full length of his extended arm out from beneath. He doesn't hesitate to direct the tip toward the Captain's neck.

"Get the fuck out."

The sentence rushes out of his bruised voicebox as a breathy, almost inaudible wheeze, but the sharp end of Steve's rapier digging into the man's skin seems to get his point across effectively enough. The man nods, hands raised, and slowly steps out of the room. Steve doesn't put his weapon down until he hears the man's footsteps recede all the way down the staircase. As soon as he does, Steve drops to his knees and coughs so hard that he can taste blood, hacking and spitting for what seems like a full quarter of an hour.

Later, Steve is laying back in one of the soft embroidered booths of his Tavern parlour, and Nancy is dabbing at his neck with a soft piece of cloth. She dips it every so often back into the bowl of warm water beside her, but she doesn't say anything. She's annoyed; Steve can see it in the dimple between her eyebrows and the stiff set of her shoulders. She has a right to be, he supposes. It's always Nancy who he turns to when things like this happen. They'd stopped sharing a bed months ago now, but Steve still considers her his closest friend. There aren't many people he trusts anymore, and even though they fell out of romantic love and lust long ago, Steve finds comfort in the fact that they still care deeply about each other. They'd agreed they were soulmates once, not long after she'd started seeing the young Quartermaster of *The Atlantic*, and Steve still thinks it rings true.

"You're a real Jackass, you know that?" Nancy says, pulling Steve out of his thoughts.

He grins at her, and combs the loose hair back out of his face, eyelids narrow with something like mirth.

"Nance, you know these assholes have always been jealous that I've still got all my teeth. This one said as much, he pointed them out even! Said his wife thought I was way too handsome and he was going to punch them all out so that the competition would be fair--"

Nancy cuts him off with a wack to his knee. She's not amused.

"Steven, I am sick of picking up the pieces when you decide you want to piss someone off with your smartass *bullshit*. I've got a business to run too, and I am not your mother."

Her voice is pointed and matter-of-fact, and god, Steve loves her for it. His smile widens a little, and he resigns to not say anything else to anger her further. For a little while, they just sit there together, Steve watching Nancy and Nancy wetting her cloth and gently blotting at the bruise that's already blooming beneath his jaw, mottled plum and sunflower yellow at the edges.

The tavern is quiet this afternoon, only a few patrons milling about

the place or nursing cups of ale and bowls of watery stew. It's a rare occasion, as it seems like there's a constant spinning wheel of Captains and crews taking their turns stripping the island of alcohol and fresh food.

Steve watches as a petite, caramel skinned girl padfoots her way into the tavern, eyes searching momentarily until they land on Nancy.

"You've got someone looking for you." Steve tells her, as his eyes track the girl making her way toward them. She's pretty, with dark hair waterfalling over her shoulders and lips stained deep red. She looks anxious, hurried.

"*Madame*," The girl whispers once she's reached them, delicate hand landing on Nancy's shoulder "We've just had word from the beach that The *Speaker* has been spotted on the horizon, their crew-- it's sizable, and Seline informed me that they've been on the water for a long time. Months, maybe."

Nancy heaves a deep sigh, and sets her rag down. She stands before responding.

"Alright, get the girls ready. Round them up and have them in my quarters as soon as you can."

She turns to Steve, smile tight, and leans over to press her lips to his forehead.

"These mens' pockets are either fat with coin, or they've suffered a massive loss. Keep an ear out, will you Steven?"

Steve tells her "*Of course*" and then, stands to watch the two women hastily leave together. Nancy is even more rigid than she was before, but he understands why. Steve's been there for Nancy when she's come to him out of her mind, sobbing and screaming with anger because she's discovered a bloodied, beaten girl in one of the back rooms. It's hard to really know which is worse -- men so livid with their captains that they lash out at the first woman they come across, or sex starved maniacs high on opium and success.

Steve takes a deep breath, and hopes to god that everyone will make

it out of tonight alive.

They're lucky Nancy's girl had come in to warn her and Steve earlier in the day, because now, teetering on the edge of three hours later, his tavern is packed wall to wall with patrons. Judging by the cheers and sing-songs Steve's been subjected to so far, it's fairly clear the crew's voyage was a success. They've had to crack into their cellar's backup stash more than once to quench the crowd's unending thirst, and his cook had informed him close to an hour ago that it was likely that they'd be running on empty by midnight.

All in all, it's been a fantastic night so far. By all means of measure the drink is flowing splendidly, and the men are in good spirits. Only one small scuffle has broken out, but it was easily broken apart by one of Nancy's borrowed whores who pushed her way between them and insisted that more than two could share a bed. The men had guffawed, and joined forces to loudly berate her suggestion in the faces of a drunk and roaring crowd, but Steve had seen all three of them sneak out into the back alley not too long after, faces flushed and hot with anticipation.

Word has reached Steve however, that the Captain has yet to arrive. He -- Billy Bones, Steve has been told, hasn't been seen at all since stepping off of his longboat and onto the beach at sundown. The men don't seem to be bothered, though, thankfully.

Steve is yet to meet Billy. He's a new Captain, recently green, but he'd raised ranks quickly. Gossip about Bones had spread through Nassau this past year like a rampant plague; anyone who didn't know who he was at this point must either be completely detached from the main population, or off their nut insane.

Men say he's quick as a whip and an incredibly fast thinker in times of confusion. He's young on top of that, in shape and on top of his game. Aside from all the, the most revered quality in a captain of

course, is his ability to deliver a prize to his crew. And the tales of gold, silver and jewels Billy has lead the crew of The *Speaker* to thus far has had men lining up on the sands the last time they were docked, begging to be a part of it.

It says a lot about Bones that Steve hasn't met him in spite of the rumours spread about Nassau about him on a near daily basis. Steve has always made a point of acquainting himself with ship Captains, being the overseer of trade is an important position after all, but he's always been met with one of the men instead -- a messenger, a trusted acquaintance, the Quartermaster or the Master Gunner. Never the man himself, never Billy.

So, it really does shock Steve when Captain William "Billy Bones" Hargrove struts right into the tavern like he owns the place to a chorus of *Whoop* 's and *Cap'n!* 's, takes two big steps up from the floor, to a stool and onto the bar, and tosses the contents of his pockets into the throng of drunk seamen gathered in front of him. Light from the burning candles scattered around the main parlour glint off of the coins flying through the air, and grabbing hands fly with them.

Billy's resounding laugh bounces around the room, somehow managing to overpower the sound of the squealing whores and arguing men gathered by the bar, fighting over who touched what piece first and whether or not that means the gold is theirs or if the catcher is the rightful owner.

Steve has to clench his jaw and force his eyes shut to stop from pushing into the crowd and pulling the obnoxious motherfucker off the bar himself. Instead, he takes a deep breath, and leaves his comfy spot in the corner to weave his way around the drunkards, ducking every so often to avoid a stray hat or a cup or a fucking *shoe*. He slips behind the bar, giving the Tender a nod of consent to retreat back into the galley, and leans against the dark oak of the spirit shelves, looking right up at the Captain.

"Get the fuck down from there, or risk your entire crew being barred." Steve shouts up at Billy, who still hasn't stopped tossing Spanish coins into the tightly packed sea of sweat-slick faces.

“You’re going to bar *us*? This is surely the most prosperous night you’ve had in a long, long time, my friend. You’re making a lot of money out of my crew.”

Billy doesn’t even turn to look at him when he speaks, and Steve is forced to stare daggers into the curly golden ringlets of hair shielding the better part of the Captain’s face instead.

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Billy casts a final shower of gold over the crowd, and turns his pockets out, making a show of it to the dismayed flock of men. They groan all in unison, the sound coming across so practiced that Steve is quickly convinced that this is a more or less common event for them. No wonder Billy shot through the ranks so quickly.

Billy hops down from the bar, and finally turns to give Steve a bright grin. His teeth are sharp and stark white, contrasting beautifully against his sun-kissed skin. Steve forgets his annoyance for a split second, because *wow* .

“No hard feelings, eh mate?” Billy says, charisma oozing out of every syllable and dripping onto the floor like honey.

Billy shrugs his thick burgundy coat off of his shoulders, leaving only a billowy white shirt behind. It’s unbuttoned all the way down to his naval, and even though it’s nothing Steve hasn’t seen before, he can feel his gaze wandering. Down the dip of the captain’s collarbone, over the thin gold chains looped around his neck, down past his belt and lingering on the fabric clinging just *so* to the Captain’s thighs. *Fuck* . He looks away out of pure embarrassment, but manages to catch Billy eye instead.

Steve has very obviously been caught staring, but Billy Bones does not seem to give a single fuck. His lips aren’t twisted into a snarl like Steve would expect, instead, they’re spread into a shark-like grin, and the tip of his tongue is caught between the rows of teeth there, tracing back and forth across the ridges like a wild animal hungry for it’s dinner.

Steve swallows, thick around the pain in his throat, and casts his eyes down, arms folding across his chest.

“Sure, yeah. No hard feelings.”

Steve doesn't look up as Billy makes a step to walk away. His pupils are fixed on a certain speck on the tavern floor, attempting to think about *anything* other than the look they just shared.

He's midway through talking himself through how he's going to tell Scott again that the hardwood pine behind the bar needs more scrubbing than the hardwood oak in the galley when warm fingertips brush across his wrist. Steve is certain Billy can feel the hammering pulse sitting below the skin there.

“I'll see 'ya, *pretty boy* .” Billy says. And then he's gone, leaving Steve to fester in the rawest *want* he's felt in months.

Notes for the Chapter:

this! absolutely came out of nowhere? i was watching black sails, and all 2.7k of this just! spilled out! i know there's a lotta exposition and not enough harringrove but, i pinky swear you'll get more of them soon :>

the title is of course inspired by the nick name of the spanish dollar (but mostly because it's the title of a chapter in treasure island)

hmu on tumblr @berebone if you wanna chat about pirate billy (or anything else) because! holy moly billy has such untapped pirate captain potential it's crazy

sorry for any mistakes or misspellings etc it's 4am and well past me bed time

2. spice.

“Wine?”

Steve is in the middle of totalling up his outgoings this month, scribbling over Mr. Scott’s delicate shorthand, when a delicate goblet is set down in front of his eyes. Steve already knows who the attached hand belongs to.

They’d spent the better part of the night before glancing at each other from across the room. Billy had disappeared just after midnight, one of Nancy’s girls letting Steve know that the crew had migrated to the brothel. He’d pushed down the pang of disappointment that shot through his chest at that. Of course Billy Bones, the revered and feared, had wanted a whore of the female variety to fuck after his long journey. Of course Steve was imagining things. Of course *pretty boy* was nothing more than an insult; cruel denigration at the sight of Steve’s blatant gawking. The heat in his eyes was nothing more than disgust. Steve’s used to it by now.

It took Steve a long time to accept that the thought of a man pressing against him in the middle of the night excited him just as much as the thought of a woman doing the same. People know. They’ve never had any *proof* of course, only unfounded suspicion -- gossip behind the hands of giggling young women and snide jibes from crewman too drunk to monitor what comes out of their mouths. Steve’s never come to blows with anyone about it, and if so the instigator would probably get a beating themselves. Men laying with men is certainly not something that is accepted in Nassau, but everyone on the island would be lying if they said they didn’t let it happen -- If they said they’d never participated in it themselves. Men get lonely out at sea. Things happen. You can only fuck the dairy goat for so long before the warm calloused hand of your bunkmate starts to tempt. It’s not accepted, or excused, and the thought of two men being involved in anything other than a small fumble in the dark is certainly off the table, but pirates are more lenient when it comes to this. They hang men for the same act on the mainland. Suspecting Steve, a simple trade director, of having the same urges, isn’t taken all that seriously, to Steve’s eternal gratitude. He’ll gladly take the comments and

laughs behind his back if the alternative is losing his head.

Steve snaps out of his thoughts when one of Billy's thick gold rings clinks against the stem of the glass.

"Steven, uh, Harrington, right? Owner?"

Billy drops down into the seat opposite Steve. He's holding a goblet of his own, and the wine inside sloshes out over the edges from how full it's been poured. Billy is wearing another crisp white blouse, this time with gaudy frills decorating the cuffs and collar. It looks expensive, but Billy doesn't even flinch when the little droplets of wine blossom out across his stomach and into the fabric. He just shrugs, before swiping a thumb over the liquid and sucking it into his mouth.

"Steve will do." Steve says. He's making a point to himself to stay as disenchanted as possible. This man is a pirate. Cheekbones and a good body don't change that fact.

"Now," Steve continues "Have you come to discuss your anchorage toll? Or our merchants base prices for goods? Whatever it is, I can help you. Anything regarding trade comes to me. Keep that in mind before you collude with my adversaries."

Steve sets his quill down, ready to talk business. He'd been meaning to have a proper meeting with Billy . Now is as good a time as any.

"Well..." Billy says, and his tongue is flitting over his lips again. "I'm sure you've gone over all that with my Quartermaster. We've been coming to Nassau a long time, now."

Steve watches as Billy takes a sip of his wine. He could swear that the Captain is making a show of it all; tilting his head back to expose his throat, lips parting once he's swallowed the alcohol down. He's staring again. They both know it.

Steve pointedly looks back down at his ledger and he's already picking his quill back up to spin it between his fingers.

"That's exactly my *point* ," Steve replies, frustrated. "I've spoken to your Quartermaster, I've spoken to your First Mate, I've spoken to

your fucking *Cabin Boy*. None of those are you. You are the Captain of your ship, are you not? I should be speaking to you about all this, not your damn crew.”

“I assure you they are all very capable of relaying my decisions to you, Steve. I’m a busy man. I’m sure you can tell.”

Steve is leaning into the table now, eyebrows furrowed and lips pressed together into a thin line. Billy, on the other hand, seems to be leaning even further back into his seat, casual as ever, straight white teeth still on display. Steve’s dealt with assholes too big for their britches like this before. Every captain has a certain air of importance; it’s how they got their jobs and won over their men. But along with that comes an ego, and too many good men have died over petty arguments between narcissist Captains about who’s *the best*.

“Listen to me, Mr. Hargrove,” Steve says, folding his ledger shut and finally looking at the man across from him properly. “You’re sitting in my tavern, in my port, fucking the whores that I allow to be here, and drinking the wine that I had imported. I suggest you play along. Your men aren’t going to be too happy with you if you cause trouble here. Nassau is the single most important stretch of sand and driftwood in the entire fucking ocean to your ilk. My father may be the big invisible hand you’re all afraid of, but you’re only here because *I* allow you to be. Don’t forget that.”

Billy tosses his head back and *laughs* , booming and jovial and altogether not what Steve expected.

“Alright, okay. You’re big and scary and you’re not going to give me any dessert after supper if I don’t behave. I get it. Jesus. Lighten up, sunshine.”

At Steve’s resulting sigh, Billy reaches over to push the offered wine closer.

“Drink. I’m just here for a little chat. We can talk taxation and rates and all that boring bullshit later.”

“I’ve got shit I could be doing.” Steve says, eyes narrowed. “This isn’t

a social club.”

“One drink.” Billy chimes, leaning into the table now. “One drink, and I’ll leave ‘ya alone. Deal?”

One drink. If that’s what it’s going to take to get this conversation over with, Steve is going to have to take the offer.

Steve sets his quill down, figures *why not*, and brings the goblet to his lips to gulp down a heady mouthful of wine. As soon as he’s swallowed it down, he can’t help the cough that follows, throat burning a little more than usual.

“What the fuck is this?”

It’s fruity, and significantly more alcoholic than usual, leaving a trail of heat from the tip of his tongue down to his stomach. He’s had drinks much stronger, surely, but never wine that’s tasted quite like this.

Billy’s grin grows even wider, somehow, and he finishes off his glass with a flourish, slamming it down on the table loud enough for the barkeep to hear.

“It’s good, right? Spanish. Came from a fucking *Man O’ War*. ”

Thirty seconds ago, Steve was about ready to kick Billy out onto his ass. Now, now Steve’s got other plans for him.

“ *Wine?* In a war ship?” Steve cocks his head to the side, interested. Man O’ War aren’t built for transporting goods. That’s what merchant ships are for. It’s odd at the very least that a fully decked out Spanish war ship would be carrying that much drink. Steve can’t see the sense in it. “Wait,” Steve continues “You stole a war ship? How the fuck did you manage that?”

“Long Story.” Billy says, and he’s leaning into the centre of the table now, voice lowering all the way down to a whisper. “It’s a scandalous tale. Spymasters, stolen schedules, mutinies, *really* good sex.” The last part almost makes Steve choke on his wine again, and he barely manages to keep his face straight at the thought of Billy involved in any kind of sex, let alone good sex. *Really* good sex. Fuck.

“Yeah?” Steve says, voice tight.

“Yeah.” Billy purrs back, something undeniably suggestive in the way his mouth wraps around the words. Steve is really starting to think he got the wrong idea earlier about Billy fucking with him.

Steve tries and fails to swallow the lump firmly stuck in his throat. He stands with a start, knees banging against the corner of the table with a sharp *thump*. Billy’s eyes follow him up, amusement written all over his face. Time to go.

“Alright, Mr. Hargrove.” Steve quashes the embarrassment bubbling in his gut, and looks Billy directly in his eye, voice clear. “You have my ear. Meet me here tomorrow and we’ll discuss this further.”

Steve gathers his papers, and heads for the stairs.

“I think I’ve got a little more than your ear, Steve.” Billy calls after him.

Steve ignores him.

Asshole.

“Don’t play into his bullshit, Steve. He’s messing with you.”

Nancy is stripped down to her under-skirt and corset. She’s weaving a thin ribbon through the binding pressed to her chest, preparing herself for the night ahead.

They used to sit like this after sex; Steve spent and laying flat against their bed sheets with Nancy in the corner, lacing her boots or curling her hair. Steve always thought that she was far too beautiful for this dump of an island.

Steve never had a problem with Nancy’s work. It’s how they met after all, how they fell in love and built a life together -- short as it may have been. But here? In this place? No. Nancy should be somewhere deserving of her. Nassau is beautiful -- Steve can’t deny that. But the havoc the pirates have brought to this place. The disease. The death.

To this day, Steve doesn't understand why she remains.

Steve sighs and buries his face in the soft duck-down of Nancy's pillow.

"That's what I thought." He mumbles. "But have you seen him, Nance? Why would he be wasting his time messing with me when he could be next door, in your brothel, fucking your girls night and day?"

"You do have a point with that." Nancy says, tying her ribbon off into a neat bow. "None of my girls have said anything about sleeping with him. And they would have said something by now if they had. They are just as charmed by him as you are, I suppose."

"So that means he is--" Steve starts. Nancy cuts him off before he can finish.

"No." She sighs. "That doesn't mean anything. He might have a woman--"

Steve scoffs.

"Men are pigs, yes. But some of them do remain monogamous for a time. It wears off, of course, it always does. But some men do have it in them to stay loyal. You were loyal to me, were you not?"

"Of course." Steve replies, turning his head to look at Nancy. She's pushing the butterfly onto the back of a small stud in the lobe of her ear.

"Then my point is made." She says, matter of fact.

Nancy steps over to her bed, heels clicking, and leans down to press a kiss to the back of Steve's head. "Come now. Make yourself useful and fasten my pearls on for me."

Steve grumbles, and pushes himself up to sit on the edge of the bed. Nancy settles down beside him, pulling her hair into a pony-tail with one hand. Steve takes the thread of pearls in his fingers, smoothing his thumb over the dimpled surface of one of them. They're a stormy grey colour, with reflects of purple and green. Expensive.

"When did you get this?" Steve asks as he guides the necklace around her throat, twisting the two little clasps on the ends together at the nape of her neck.

"A month or so ago." Nancy flourishes. Steve can see her cheeks flush pink even in the dim light of the room. "Jonathan." She says, lifting a delicate hand to finger the pearls perched atop her collarbone. "He got them for me. I've never seen anything like them, have you?"

"No." Steve says, a little deflated. Nancy must look back on their relationship and laugh. He never did anything like this for her.

"He has a friend in Havana. There are traders from all over the world there. I can't even begin to imagine how much it cost."

Steve can hear the smile in her voice. There's a twinge of sadness somewhere inside of him; a needle digging its way into his heart. It's not that he still wants to be with her. That ship sailed long ago. It's regret. Regret that he could never make her smile the way that she's smiling now. Regret that he couldn't be the one to make her happy.

"Nance?" He says, reaching over to weave their fingers together. "I'm happy for you. Real happy. He's a good man."

"I know." She whispers. And just like that, she's squeezing his hand and straightening to her feet.

"I have to go. Talk later, yeah?"

"Yeah. Come by tonight. I'll have some food made up for you and Jon."

"Great." Nancy grins, leaning down once again to peck the crown of Steve's head. "And Steve," she continues "Find some other boy to kiss, okay? That one is trouble."

Steve laughs, and raises his free hand to his forehead in a mock salute. "Yes Madame."

He listens to the click-clack of her heels as she leaves the room and makes her way down the hall.

Find some other boy to kiss, Steve thinks , easy enough.

Later that night, Steve sets out on his mission. He's going to get laid tonight and he's not going to be thinking about Billy the entire time. Simple. He's gotten laid without thinking about Billy before -- surely he can do it again. Granted, he hadn't actually seen Billy then; never looked at Billy's broad chest, or his firm tanned arms, or his *thighs* -- the things Steve would do to those thighs.

Steve pinches himself. He needs a drink. A strong one.

It doesn't take Steve long to get a buzz going. He's not a lightweight per say -- he just knows exactly what he needs to drink to get himself going.

There's plenty of work that he could be doing right now. They have sugar coming in next week. Grain. There's even a silk trader stopping by before he sails on to Dominica. All of that needs to be organized. Scheduled. Local traders need to be notified.

Steve can feel himself drifting. This was a stupid idea. He's not a desperate teenager anymore, no, he's a full grown man sitting alone in his own tavern hoping for a fumble in the dark with a stranger -- it's pitiful.

Steve is sliding his flagon across the bar, resigning himself to a sad, cold night alone, when a familiar voice echoes around the interior walls of the building.

"There we were--" the voice says "laid claim to a war ship of all things, not expecting to find anything other than gunpowder and rations below, when *Captain* I hear in my ear, *you need to see this, sir*. In the hold -- hundreds of barrels of the stuff!"

Steve whips his head around to the source of the voice.

Strolling through the front door with an arm wrapped around the shoulder of a small portly man, is Billy.

Steve recognizes the man with Billy right away. It's the Captain who accosted him in his office the morning prior.

Steve storms over, almost knocking his stool over with how quickly he stands up, and digs his pointer finger into the chest of Billy's new friend.

"I told you to get the fuck out." Steve hisses, "The 'permanently' was implied."

"Hey now, pretty boy. What's the problem here?" Steve hears from his periphery.

Steve doesn't even turn to look at Billy when he speaks; keeps his eyes locked firmly on those of the man in front of him instead. "Shut up, Billy."

"And you." Steve grabs a fistfull of the Captain's shirt in his palm. "Get the fuck out of my bar. You're barred. As is your entire crew."

"Woah, Steve." Billy says, and even though he's clearly making the effort to sound like he's trying to break the two up, he's not actually moving to do so.

"Get out." Steve repeats. The guy looks scared. Good.

Steve lets go of the Captain's shirt, and as soon as he does, the man scampers out the door and back onto the street outside.

"Someone's touchy this evening." Billy chides as Steve turns to face him.

"You just had to go and open your big mouth didn't you? When you came to me about the wine, I assumed that you would be courteous in not also trying to pawn it off to every other man and his dog on this damn island."

"Hey." Billy says, and his eyebrows are furrowed now, voice softening a little. "I wasn't doing that. That guy's got about as much brains as a plank of four-by-two. I was just tryin' to give him a good time. The meathead loves to hear about the shit we do on the water, that's all."

Billy places both of his hands on Steve's shoulders. "I won't tell another soul, alright?"

Steve shrugs Billy off, scrubbing a hand over his face with a deep exhale.

“I told you to come back tomorrow.” Steve says, anger seemingly evaporating just as quickly as it came. “But whatever, if you want to talk about this now, we can talk about this now. I’d rather get this nailed down sooner than later.”

After a good hour of discussion, Steve and Billy organize something of a deal. Billy has seventy-two barrels of Spanish wine in his hold. Steve is going to buy it all at a generous mark-up, with two caveats. The first being that this is an exclusive deal -- Billy will come to Steve with any and all wine. And secondly, that Billy and his crew are going to be actively seeking out and acquiring more stock.

Billy assures Steve that they already have leads on ships carrying the wine and that they will have more before the end of the season. He tells Steve of the Captain’s log in their stolen Man-o-War; that it contains the pick up location of the wine, key ports and stop-off islands between.

By all accounts, Steve probably shouldn’t trust Billy with all of this. He only met him a couple of days ago -- it’s insanity that they’ve organized such a massive long-term operation in such a short amount of time. Steve knows that Billy is a complete and utter jackass. He’s pompous, rude, and a complete narcissist. Steve pushes all of that aside though. For some strange reason, he *wants* to trust Billy; wants this to work out.

It must be the wine.

They’re both well past tipsy after a while, plans long forgotten in favour of goblet’s filled with spiced alcohol and stories about their journey’s across the sea and in Nassau alike.

The flirting begins somewhere between their fourth and fifth jug. It starts with that familiar gleam in Billy’s eyes and escalates before long into full blown staring. They’re both party to it. Steve can’t seem to help himself.

“That was one of the hottest things I’ve ever seen.” Billy says after a

while. He's leaning all the way back in his chair with one boot up on the armrest. Steve can see his belly button and he has to make an effort to drag his eyes away from the light smattering of hair beneath to make eye contact with Billy again.

"What was?" Steve asks, and he didn't even hear what Billy said properly, too distracted and drunk to properly make it out.

"When you kicked that old fucker out of here. The *fire* in your eyes,"

Steve watches Billy's tongue wet his lips, watches the slow bob of his adam's apple as he swallows.

"Want you to hold me down with that look in your eyes." Billy continues, and his open hand is trailing up his own thigh and settling on a certain spot below his belt. Steve can see him push the heel of his palm down and *squeeze*.

Steve somehow feels as though he's frozen solid and burning alive at the same time. His pupils are darting back and forth between Billy's hand and his parted lips. Billy's hips twitch, and he swivels them just enough for Steve to notice. He can hear the resulting groan from across the table, even amongst all the noise surrounding them.

No one seems to have noticed yet. The tavern is packed full to the brim as per usual, but the crowd is either turned toward the bar or absorbed in conversation.

"*Steve*." Billy says, and it's feather-light, riding on the tail of a sharp gasp.

It's all too much. Steve doesn't think he's moved so fast in his life. He stands, drains his full goblet of wine and wraps his shaking fingers around Billy's offending wrist to pull him onto his feet. They abandon their spot in the corner of the tavern, making haste for Steve's quarters as soon as a gap opens up in the floor. Billy's fingertips are resting, barely there, against the small of Steve's back, guiding them toward the stairs. They leave burning holes where leather should be -- leave Steve's head pounding at the thought of feeling them, *really* feeling them, against the skin there.

As soon as Steve's fumbled the key out his pocket and pushed it into the lock, Billy is on him. His mouth is hot against Steve's jaw, and the fingers Steve had so desperately wanted on his skin moments prior dig into his sides, pulling desperately at Steve's waistcoat.

Steve, briefly taken aback but just as eager, slides his open palms up Billy's chest and over the gold medallions and chains layered there. He doesn't quite know what he's doing; having had no one since Nancy, and Christ, it's surely been years now since he's lain hands on a man this way.

The thought scares Steve, even though it has no reason to. He has a man in front of him, willing, and most certainly attractive, but he can't seem to shake the trepidation unfurling in his gut.

His fingers are trembling as he reaches to undo the only remaining button on Billy's shirt, moving quickly to untuck the fabric from beneath the thick belt holding it together. Billy's tongue presses flat against the curve of Steve's shoulder, and his teeth sink into the skin there.

"What the fuck *was* that?" Steve hisses, partly out of indignation and partly from the feeling of Billy's canine's digging into his neck.

"Want you to fuck me. I've wanted you to fuck me ever since I first saw you--" Billy breathes out, and Steve can feel how hard he is against his upper thigh. "Know you want to fuck me, too."

Steve falters briefly. Was it really that obvious? God, he was practically drooling over him standing on top of that bar, *of course* it was obvious--

"Stop thinking." Billy grunts, hips circling just like they were downstairs, grinding himself against Steve. "Everyone wants to fuck me."

Steve shudders and digs his fingernails into the soft skin of Billy's waist, suppressing the blatant moan that almost escapes him at the contact.

Billy starts to kiss his way up the base of Steve's throat and across his

jaw. They're both half-naked now, Billy having pulled Steve's jacket down and unbuttoned the front of his pants while he was briefly lost in thought. Steve can't help but push back against Billy, jolts of pure heat shooting up his torso with every moment of connection.

Billy is groaning filthy and loud in Steve's ear and he honestly feels like he's dreaming; no longer drunk on wine, but on the scent of Billy's skin instead -- oak and salt and worn leather.

Although they're clumsy at first, it doesn't take long for Steve and Billy to find the perfect rhythm. When they finally do, Steve has to bury his face in the crook of Billy's neck to stop himself from shouting. Steve's back is still pressed firmly against the wall, and his knees hurt like a bitch from the position they're currently in, but there's absolutely no way he's stopping; not for one second.

Billy comes first. It's clear in the way his hips stutter and in the accompanying "Oh, *fuck* ." that's hissed into Steve's shoulder.

It doesn't take Steve long after that; his cock is pressing hard against Billy's, nothing but thin white cloth between them, straining and hot and just *right* . He can feel the dampness seeping through, can feel the evidence of what they've done slick against his under-clothes, and it's all he needs to come, too. He can feel himself *throbbing* ; the pit of his stomach clenching tight, and it's all over. He lets a silent scream out into Billy's shoulder, digs his fingernails so tight into his hips that he's probably drawn blood, and comes the hardest he has since he was a *teenager*.

Billy doesn't say anything. Steve doesn't either. They stay standing, and Steve does his best to catch his breath. He can hear heels click-clacking down the hallway outside but he doesn't think much of it. He's staring straight ahead, completely taken aback by what has just occurred.

"Y'alright, Sunshine?" Billy says, finally breaking the silence. Steve furrows his eyebrows, body surprisingly still considering the fact that his legs feel like they might give out any second.

Before he even gets the chance to reply, Steve's bedroom door swings open, almost whacking Steve in the face with how close they still are

to it. "Steven, honey." Comes a voice from the hall. *Nancy* . Fuck. "Jon and I are here for dinn-- oh?"

Steve and Billy spring apart so fast that Steve bangs his head against the wall behind him.

"Fucking-- *Christ* !" Steve curses, cradling the back of his head. He can hear Billy laughing from a few feet away, almost maniacal, still half naked with his pants at his ankles.

Nancy is standing stock still in the door frame, one arm stuck out where it must have been when she pushed the door open. Her eyes are saucers, darting back and forth between Billy and Steve in shock.

"Nance?" He tries, rubbing at the back of his head. His button-up shirt is laying almost ripped in half by his feet. Steve can't even imagine what Nancy must be thinking.

"Unbelievable." She whispers finally, before pulling the door shut. It's silent for a minute, and then Steve hears her heels click down the hallway.

"Holy *shit* Harrington. That your girlfriend or what?" Billy guffaws, shimmying his pants back up his thighs.

"Ex-girlfriend." Steve says, a little defensive. Somehow, that makes Billy laugh even louder.

Steve rolls his eyes and plucks his discarded shirt up off of the floor.

"Yeah, alright, whatever you say." Billy says, lips turned up in a smirk. He's blatantly looking up and down Steve's body, waggling his eyebrows suggestively. "I'd absolutely love to stay Steve," Billy continues, "but I've gotta go. We're headin' out at sunrise, and I've got Captainly shit I've got to do first."

Steve shrugs his shoulders, and attempts to push his arm through what's left of a sleeve. "That it then?"

Billy steps over, shirt still hanging off his shoulders and sweat still gathered atop his brow. "Don't give up on me that quick" He breathes out, before leaning in to press their lips together.

And with that, he's out the door.

"We're gonna be rich men, Steve-o!" He hears Billy shout back at him from down the hall.

Steve squeezes his eyes shut. He's fucked.

Notes for the Chapter:

been super busy with life and stuff so! i'm really sorry this took so long to get up. on the upside, this is the longest chapter i have ever written before for anything in my entire life, so i hope it was worth the wait???

do people still read harringrove fics? who knows! guess i'm about to find out!

comment are appreciated etc etc etc i have genuinely been chipping away at this for months so i hope it turned out ok.

sorry for any errors, i'm sneakily tryna edit and post this at work so i might not have caught everything.

love y'all xoxo.

tumblr @berebone